

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS

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## ACT ONE

### OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

While cheery Christmas music plays, we'll get a fun and lively history and geography lesson on the towns of East and West Riverton, New Hampshire, starting with an old map that shows the town of Riverton. This is followed by postcards that show Riverton's Christmas celebrations, which seemed epic. In fact, the town of Riverton won the "New Hampshire Christmas Spirit Competition" several years in a row!

But then a newspaper headline tells us that voters have elected to split Riverton into two towns - East and West. We see the map again, and it shows a border being drawn up the center, directly through the town square, dividing it and the rest of the burg in half.

Then we'll see the East Riverton versus West Riverton rivalry, that encompasses football teams, bake sales, world records, and yes, Christmas, as they both vie for the Spirit competition but don't win. We get one last look at that map.

### EXT. WEST RIVERTON - DAY

West Riverton is a quintessential New England town in the rolling hills of New Hampshire. It's covered in snow and Christmas decorations on the buildings along Main Street.

A banner over the street reads "WELCOME LIBERTY CANDLE JUDGES" and underneath says "50TH ANNUAL NEW HAMPSHIRE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT COMPETITION."

We see LIAM CLARK (40s, rugged, town booster), walking down the street as the town is getting its day started. He is head down, looking at his phone, typing an email as he approaches a bakery. Two people come out carrying a pink pastry box. These are Liam's parents, CAMILLE (60s, irrepressible, sunny) and BEN (60s, enthusiastic go-getter). Liam looks up and sees them.

LIAM

Mom, Dad? What are you doing here?

CAMILLE

Liam, good morning! We're just getting a little Christmas cheer.

Camille opens the box, and we see pastries shaped like Santa.

BEN

I know it's only three weeks until Christmas, but it just doesn't feel like the holidays until we get some of Annie's Santa pastries.

LIAM

I was just going in to get some myself.

BEN

Like father, like son...

LIAM

They aren't for me. Liberty Candle Works is having the opening ceremony of the Christmas Spirit competition today, and the owner of the company has a legendary sweet tooth.

BEN

Is giving pastries to the guy who decides the winner allowed?

LIAM

He doesn't judge the competition. There's a separate panel for that. But making him happy with pastries certainly can't hurt.

CAMILLE

Are we still meeting tomorrow to decorate the Mayor's Residence.

LIAM

Mom, West Riverton isn't big enough to have a "residence." It's my house.

CAMILLE

You're the mayor and you reside there so it's the Mayor's Residence. Isn't that what they say you're supposed to decorate in the first round of the competition?

LIAM

Okay, whatever you want to call it, the volunteers are meeting bright and early tomorrow.

BEN

Will there be more pastries?

CAMILLE

Ignore him. West Riverton is going to win this year!

BEN

That's right. I told everyone we're getting the Liberty Candle named after us. West Riverton Pine! No, Candy Cane. Ask for a candy cane candle.

LIAM

The candle is nice, but I'm more interested in the prize money and tourism bump the winning town gets. Liberty Candle does a lot of publicity for this competition.

CAMILLE

I love going to see the towns that win every year.

BEN

This year that's going to be us. We've got it in the bag. I mean, East Riverton made it into the final round last year...

LIAM

Don't remind me.

BEN

Still stings, huh?

LIAM

No. *Their* mayor reminds me every chance she gets. Sarah is the most competitive person I've ever met. She's been that way since we were kids

BEN

I'm guessing she'd probably say the same thing about you.

LIAM

I'm not competitive. I'm... enthusiastic. I love this town and the people, and I love the competition because it's how we celebrate every year.

CAMILLE

That's the Christmas spirit.

LIAM

And I'm really going to love it  
when we beat East Riverton.

Liam looks determined.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON - DAY

East Riverton is just as charming as West, with cute stores,  
restaurants, and more - they are practically twins.

This is where we meet SARAH REED (40s, sunny, can-do  
attitude, All-American), and her son JUSTIN REED (14, eager,  
upbeat) as they come out of a bakery with a pink pastry box.  
Joining them is TRICIA, the owner of the bakery who stops in  
the doorway to say goodbye.

TRICIA

Thanks, Sarah.

SARAH

Tricia, thank you! Reindeer shaped  
pastries are perfect... and so much  
cuter than the Santa Claus pastries  
they have in West Riverton.

TRICIA

That's good. We need to go all out  
to beat them and win this year!

SARAH

We're starting first thing tomorrow  
on decorating the...  
(does air quotes)  
"Mayor's Residence."

JUSTIN

You mean our house?

SARAH

Yes. But this is going to make it  
spectacular.

TRICIA

With you as mayor how could it be  
anything else? Bye, Justin.

JUSTIN

Bye!

Tricia goes back in the store, and Sarah and Justin start  
walking down the street. Sarah starts humming a cheery  
Christmas carol.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Mom, have you thought of what you want for Christmas yet?

SARAH

Honey, I will love whatever you get me.

JUSTIN

That doesn't help.

SARAH

You could make something. Like that finger painting of the snowmen you did that one year.

JUSTIN

I was five. I'm fourteen now.

SARAH

Oh, okay. Then how about a car? I could use a new car.

JUSTIN

You'd have to seriously raise my allowance.

They approach Frank's Electric, a small storefront electrician's shop, just as FRANK MILLER (40s, nice guy) comes out wearing a work coat that has his name on it.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Dad, Mom wants me to buy her a car for Christmas.

FRANK

Then she should put that in her letter to Santa. Good morning.

JUSTIN

(hugs his dad)

Morning. Hey, Dad, we're going to Enzo's tonight to check out his Christmas decorations. Do you want to go with us?

FRANK

I can't tonight, bud. Linda and I have a date night planned. But you and me are spending all afternoon together tomorrow after school.

SARAH

What are you guys doing?

FRANK

We're helping to decorate the mayor's house in West Riverton.

SARAH

Frank! You're going to help *Liam*?

FRANK

Sarah, come on. I've known him since we were kids, long before the two of you started competing against each other in everything. Besides, I live in West Riverton.

SARAH

But your shop is in East Riverton. And Justin...

FRANK

And both Justin and I helped you last year. Sarah, you really need to let go of this rivalry.

JUSTIN

Isn't Christmas when we all come together? Goodwill toward men?

SARAH

Yes, of course. We will absolutely do that... after we win.

FRANK

And on that merry note, Justin, let's get you to school.

Frank and Justin start to leave but then Justin comes back and takes a pastry from the box and runs off. Sarah smiles.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing shot of the city hall for West Riverton, over which we hear a group of children singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

INT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - LOBBY - DAY

In the small lobby, there are several people, including the singing children, watching and taking pictures of Liam putting the star on a Christmas tree. The kids finish and everyone applauds.

LIAM

Great job, kids! Thank you so much  
for coming out! Merry Christmas.

Liam shakes a few hands, poses for a photo, and then as the crowd breaks up, he is joined by KENDALL ST. JOHN (30s, take charge woman) who is reviewing a list.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We need more Christmas lights.

KENDALL

On the tree?

LIAM

No, on my house for the competition. When we turn on those lights there should be an immediate brownout on the entire Eastern seaboard.

KENDALL

We only have enough left in the budget to maybe blow a few fuses in New Hampshire and parts of Maine. But we can go to the big Christmas store over on Highway 40. They have discounts for buying in bulk.

LIAM

Kendall, you're the President of the Town Council. You are allowed to delegate.

KENDALL

(points at tree)

You picked out that tree and set it up yourself.

LIAM

I saw the one Sarah got for East Riverton's city hall. Ours is nicer.

(looks at watch)

We need to head out if we're going to make it to the opening ceremony in time.

KENDALL

You said you wanted to stop and get some fruitcake from the coffee shop, too.



LIAM

Right. Thank you for the reminder.  
(beat - looks at tree)  
You know, I bet Sarah is getting a  
ton of lights to decorate her  
house.

KENDALL

(sighs)  
I'll find room in the budget.

LIAM

(with a smile)  
Do we really need snow plows?

Kendall laughs and the two of them exit the lobby.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing East Riverton's city hall, over which we hear  
the music from an electronic bell choir.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah is in her nice but not ostentatious office with YALE  
HARDING (20s, brainy, organized, but not a fussbudget), her  
"Chief of Staff." They are enjoying the bell choir, which is  
sitting on her desk, and Sarah is humming/singing along for a  
part of it. The song ends.

SARAH

Yale, I love this!

YALE

We can put them over the fireplace  
in your house and have a concert  
for the judges as they come in.

SARAH

It's perfect.

YALE

(looks at a list)  
I think that takes care of what  
we're doing for round one of the  
competition. If we make it to  
round two...

SARAH

*When* we make it to round two...

YALE

We've got everything ready for the Christmas carnival in town hall, which was a great idea by the way.

SARAH

Round two is about doing something that shows off the fun side of Christmas in East Riverton. What's more fun than games and food? How are we doing for round three?

YALE

The company says our Christmas tree will be the biggest in the entire state of New Hampshire.

SARAH

The entire town, gathered around the tree for the lighting... that is perfect for showing what Christmas really means in East Riverton. We're going to win this, year. I can feel it.

YALE

Do you think the winner will get the new distribution center Liberty Candle is planning?

SARAH

It's not part of the prize, but I think it's possible. The owner of the company loves Christmas, and whichever town wins could be a frontrunner. And we've got all that land out by the old mill that we be perfect for it.

YALE

Fingers crossed.  
(looks at watch)  
Didn't you say you wanted to stop to get some coffee before we went to the ceremony?

SARAH

Yes. Thank you.  
(beat - smile)  
But, we have time for one more song.

Sarah hits the button on the remote and the bells start playing again as she hums/sings along.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

This is the RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP, a cute café/diner type of establishment that is merrily decorated.

Liam and Kendall approach from one direction while Sarah and Yale approach from the opposite direction. They all meet at the front doors of the coffee shop.

It is important to note that when these two interact, it is not angry or hostile. They are professionals and politicians, so everything is said with a smile and good humor, even if what lies underneath is a fiercely competitive rivalry and some passive-aggressive tendencies.

LIAM  
Sarah.

SARAH  
Liam.

They each open a door and hold it for the other.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
After you.

LIAM  
No, I insist...

SARAH  
No, no, go ahead...

From inside the café we hear a voice yell out.

MAUREEN (O.S.)  
Will one of you please go first!  
You're letting all the heat out!

Sarah and Liam square off, then enter at the same time. Kendall and Yale stay behind.

KENDALL  
Go ahead. We'll wait out here.

Once they are gone, Kendall and Yale look at each other and smile as if they are up to something.

YALE  
Do you think this is going to work?

KENDALL

The more often we can get them together the more they have to be nice to each other. Maybe it'll finally stick.

YALE

It would make my job so much easier.

KENDALL

It would make my *life* easier.

YALE

Are we still on for drinks next week?

KENDALL

Absolutely. Can I bring my boyfriend?

YALE

Sure. Can I bring mine?

KENDALL

Of course.

Kendall and Yale shake hands.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

This cute café, which is fully decked out for Christmas, straddles the border between East and West Riverton. Half of the building is in one town and half is in the other town. The border is marked by a sign in the middle of room.

Liam and Sarah enter and walk up to the counter where they find MAUREEN BERGER (40s, funny, everyone's mother type). She goes about fixing coffees and holiday fruitcake for them.

MAUREEN

It's too cold outside for the "after you" routine today.

GAVIN

Maureen, I was just...

STELLA

I was only trying to...

\*

MAUREEN

(over them)

I know what you just and what you were only trying to. I know all your tricks with each other.

SARAH

You don't know everything about us.

LIAM

Yeah, we're not that predictable.

(points at menu)

Can I get a peppermint...

Maureen puts two to-go cups of coffee on the counter before Liam can even finish his order.

MAUREEN

(to Liam)

Peppermint macchiato.

(to Sarah)

Egg nog latte.

They look at her, then quietly take their coffees. All of the following is said with a friendly, politician smile, even though there's more going on underneath.

SARAH

(big smile to Liam)

So, are you ready for the Christmas spirit competition?

LIAM

(ditto)

Ready to win? Absolutely.

SARAH

East Riverton made it to the final round last year.

LIAM

(forces a bigger smile)

West Riverton will make it even further this year. And we'll get the distribution center, too, right Maureen?

SARAH

Maureen is on our side.

MAUREEN

I am on no one's side. I live in the country outside of both city limits, and this place is Switzerland. It's the only way we can survive straddling the border between the two towns. Now, if you two don't stop, you're not getting any of my Christmas fruitcake.

SARAH

You can't do that. It's tradition.

LIAM

It's the best fruitcake in the world.

SARAH

Well, at least we agree on that.

Maureen gives them two "to-go" bags.

MAUREEN

I wouldn't really do that to you.

(pointedly)

Besides, the spirit of Christmas is all about sharing and helping your fellow man, right?

Liam and Sarah look at each other, put on their best politician smiles, and nod.

GAVIN

Yes.

STELLA

Of course it is.

\*

MAUREEN

Good. Don't you have towns to run?

LIAM

Thank you, Maureen.

SARAH

Bye, Maureen.

Liam and Sarah walk toward the doors.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Both Sarah and Liam open the doors for each other and try to get the other to go through them.

SARAH

After you.

LIAM

No, after you.

Maureen comes over to the doors.

MAUREEN

After both of you.

She gently but firmly pushes them out the doors. Kendall and Yale try not to laugh. The doors close and Liam and Sarah look at one another for a moment, nod, and join Kendall and Yale to walk off in opposite directions.

EXT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - DAY

Establishing shot of Liberty Candle Works.

INT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - LOBBY STAGE - DAY

In the festively decorated lobby of the candle company, JOHN GIBSON (60s, irrepressible, optimistic) is on a small stage standing next to a big Christmas tree as he accepts envelopes of the applications for the Christmas competition. It is a lively ceremony with people dressed as elves and Santa, plus reporters and photographers. Kendall and Yale are in the crowd watching, each with the pink pastry boxes we saw earlier. Liam and Sarah are in the line as a man steps up to John and gives him an envelope. John looks at it.

JOHN

Our winner from last year and  
several years before, Dover Lake!  
Welcome to the Liberty Candle  
Christmas Spirit Competition!

There is applause as John hands the envelope to an "elf" who takes it off. Sarah steps up and hands John her envelope.

JOHN (CONT'D)

A finalist from last year, East  
Riverton. Welcome to the  
competition!

More applause and another elf takes the envelope. Liam steps up with his envelope.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And last, but not least, let's say  
a big welcome to West Riverton!

Applause and an elf. Liam steps over to Sarah and they eye each other warily. Kendall and Yale hand them the pastry boxes while John finishes his remarks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That makes twenty-eight official  
entrants! You know, over the last  
fifty years, the New Hampshire  
Christmas Spirit competition has  
become a beloved institution.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yes, of course, we sell a lot of candles because of it, but it's about so much more than that. It's a tradition that brings communities together.

REPORTER

Mr. Gibson, can you go over the round and what the winning town receives?

JOHN

Of course. Round one, decorate the mayor's residence. Ten towns move forward to round two where they must do something that shows how much fun Christmas can be. Then the top three towns go into the third and final round, where they must put on a gathering that speaks to what Christmas means to their community. The winner is announced December 23rd and will get our 50th Anniversary candle named after them, limited edition, very special. Plus a cash prize for their parks and recreation department and bragging rights as the New Hampshire town with the most Christmas spirit.

REPORTER

What about the distribution center you want to build? Will the winning town get that, too?

JOHN

Not officially.  
(sly smile)

But I will say that the qualities the judges look for - a strong sense of community, neighbors who work together for the common good... those are the kinds of qualities that I will be looking for when I make my decision about where we expand.

Liam and Sarah take this information seriously.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, thank you, everyone. Merry Christmas!



The reporters disband, and John steps off the stage. Liam and Sarah make a beeline.

INT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - LOBBY - DAY

Liam and Sarah catch up to John.

LIAM

John, hi. Merry Christmas.

JOHN

Liam, hello. So glad to have you in the competition again this year.  
(regarding pastry boxes)  
Are those what I think they are?

LIAM

I know how much you love our Santa pastries.

SARAH

(hands John the box)  
But not as much as you're going to love our reindeer pastries!

JOHN

I'm sure I will love them both.

SARAH

It's just a little way of saying congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the competition.

JOHN

Thank you. You know, when we started we only had five towns enter.

SARAH

It's almost as much of a tradition as your Christmas candles are. My family loves them, by the way.

LIAM

So does mine. My father requested a candy cane scented candle when West Riverton wins this year.

JOHN

(laughs)  
One step at a time, Liam. Well, I need to get back to work. It was lovely seeing both of you again.

LIAM

Thank you, John. You, too.

SARAH

Thanks John.

Liam and Sarah smile big as he walks away, then turn to look each other. Their smiles turn competitive - it's on.

LIAM

Reindeer pastries?

SARAH

Do you have something against reindeer?

LIAM

No. Do you have something against Santa Claus?

The person dressed like Santa happens to pass by. He stops having heard this. Sarah rushes to explain.

SARAH

No, no, no, it's... pastries.

Santa raises an eyebrow and walks away. Liam smiles as he does the same.

EXT. ENZO'S PIZZA - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a pizza joint that is very heavily decorated for Christmas - lights, inflatable Santa and reindeer, and much more.

INT. ENZO'S PIZZA - ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

Inside the restaurant is even more extraordinary, with some sort of Christmas decoration covering every square inch of the place - even the tables are covered in wrapping paper. The dining area is packed with customers enjoying the food and the atmosphere. Liam, Ben, and Camille enter, taking it all in with big smiles. They are approached by ENZO (50s, all smiles, big personality).

ENZO

Mayor Clark! The whole Clark family! Merry Christmas! I wasn't expecting you tonight.

LIAM

Kendall told me she made a reservation. Oh well, it looks amazing. I don't know how you top yourself every year but I think you've done it again.

ENZO

What can I say? I like Christmas just a little bit.

CAMILLE

Just a little?

ENZO

(laughs)

I hope you're hungry. I recommend the Merry Manicotti or we're doing our Christmas tree pizza again.

He points to a waiter walking by with a pizza shaped like a Christmas tree - pepperoni as ornaments and colorful peppers as lights.

BEN

How could we say no to that?

ENZO

Come on, I have one table left...

Just then, the door opens and Sarah and Justin enter, charmed by the decorations. Sarah's smile fades quickly when she sees Liam.

ENZO (CONT'D)

Mayor Reed! Welcome!

SARAH

(warm)

Hi, Enzo. It looks amazing!

(to Liam - cool)

Liam.

(warm again)

Ben! Camille! It's so good to see you!

CAMILLE

(genuine affection)

Sarah!

BEN

It's good to see you, Sarah.

SARAH

You remember my son, Justin?

CAMILLE

Of course. Look how handsome he is...

JUSTIN

(embarrassed)

Thank you, Mrs. Clark.

SARAH

Enzo, please tell us you're doing the Christmas tree pizza this year.

ENZO

Of course! But... I was just about to seat Mayor Clark, and they're taking the last table. It might be a little while...

SARAH

Oh, no. Yale told us we should come tonight, but that's okay, we can take it to go.

BEN

Don't be silly. Sit with us!

LIAM

What? Oh, Dad, I...

SARAH

No, we don't want to intrude.

LIAM

Right, they don't want to intrude.

CAMILLE

It's no intrusion! The more the merrier, especially this time of year. Enzo? Lead the way.

Enzo grabs menus and they are off. Liam and Sarah look at each other for a moment, both of them obviously not happy about this development, but they put on their best politician smiles and Sarah walks off. Liam reluctantly follows.

INT. ENZO'S PIZZA - TABLE - NIGHT

At the table later, most of a Christmas tree pizza has been polished off and Ben, Camille, and Justin are laughing and having a great time. Liam and Sarah, less so.

CAMILLE

And since Liam couldn't do it, your mother said she could hit the high notes.

JUSTIN

You're kidding. How old were they?

BEN

About your age, I think.

LIAM

I could have done it.

CAMILLE

Sweetheart, it was "O Holy Night." An opera singer has a hard time hitting those notes.

BEN

You should have heard him trying to practice, upstairs in his room. The first time he did it, we thought he was being attacked by a wild animal.

LIAM

Okay, can we talk about something else?

JUSTIN

Mom, did you do it? You sing and hum all the time now, so you must've been great at it.

SARAH

Justin, it was a long time ago...

CAMILLE

The important thing is she tried.

Justin thinks for a second then addresses Sarah and Liam.

JUSTIN

So, you guys knew each other pretty well then, huh?

BEN

Are you kidding? They competed on everything. Student council, debate club, college applications...

CAMILLE

And, since they've both become mayor, it's always about which town is winning what.

SARAH

We're not that bad.

LIAM

We're passionate about our towns and the people who live in them.

SARAH

Yes. Well put.

LIAM

And when West Riverton wins the competition this year...

SARAH

Then that would be a surprise.

JUSTIN

Mayor Clark, did my dad tell you I'm helping you decorate this year?

LIAM

He did, and we can't wait to have you. Although, I have to admit that I would've expected your mother to view that as a conflict of interest.

SARAH

(beat - smiles for Justin)  
No. It's fine. As long as you don't give away anything East Riverton is doing.

LIAM

And what happens in West Riverton stays in West Riverton.

JUSTIN

Absolutely. You can both trust me.

SARAH

You know, Liam, I was just thinking about that issue we needed to discuss.

LIAM

What issue?

Sarah kicks him under the table.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Oh, right. That issue. Yes, do you want to go talk about that now?

SARAH

That would be great. We'll be right back.

Liam and Sarah get up and start to walk away.

BEN

Justin, did your mother ever tell you about the time she and Liam both tried to convince the governor to host their Christmas tree lightings?

The expression on Liam and Sarah's faces tells us that this is not a good story. They shake their heads and hurry off.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

In a festively decorated town square, there is a sign marking the border between East and West Riverton, which runs more or less up the middle of it. There are two benches facing each other, one on the East side and one on the West. Although Liam and Sarah are a little less smiley when no one else is around, they still maintain their air of professionalism - they aren't sniping at each other, it's more like a convivial conversation with veiled barbs.

LIAM

Why are we talking here? No witnesses?

SARAH

Neutral territory. Half in your town, half in mine.

LIAM

Actually, our side of the square is about ten feet wider than yours. That's why we have the statue of Riverton's founder.

SARAH

You're just trying to push my buttons, aren't you?

LIAM

Is it working?

SARAH

No.

(beat - can't help it)  
So, what? Did you come out here in  
the middle of the night with a  
measuring tape?

LIAM

It wasn't the *middle* of the night.

SARAH

I don't want to know. Look, I  
wanted to talk to you about Justin.  
Since he's working with Frank on  
your house, I just want to make  
sure that he doesn't get dragged  
into the middle of this.

LIAM

This?

SARAH

Us? Our "competitive spirit."

LIAM

Sarah. Come on. I would never  
involve Justin in that.

SARAH

(beat)  
Thank you.

LIAM

Having said that, when West  
Riverton wins the Christmas Spirit  
competition, I fully intend to  
never let you forget that we did it  
with your son's help.

SARAH

And when you lose to East Riverton,  
I fully intend to use it as a  
teachable moment to show Justin  
that winning isn't everything.

They allow each other small smiles - it's obvious that they  
enjoy this little dance of wills between them.

LIAM

So, what are you doing for your  
round two event? Presuming you  
make it to round two.



SARAH

I don't know, what are you doing?

They both smile at each other - they know full well they won't tell the other that.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Not one little tidbit?

LIAM

(beat - smile)

They want me to dress up like Santa Claus.

SARAH

I'd pay good money to see that.

LIAM

You can come if you'd like. I'll even save you a seat.

SARAH

Okay. I'll do the same for you at ours.

LIAM

(beat - smile)

Any interest in making this a little more interesting?

SARAH

How so?

LIAM

If one of us wins, we get our pick of something from the other's town. I want the gazebo.

SARAH

I'm not giving you the gazebo. How about a nice dinner instead?

Liam smiles, turns to her and offers his hand.

LIAM

May the best mayor win.

SARAH

May the best town win.

They shake on it and walk off.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You're going to make a great Santa.  
Are those white hairs I see in your  
beard already?

LIAM

(points to square)  
Ten feet.

They continue walking back toward the restaurant.

**END ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

The mayor's residence in West Riverton (Liam's house) is swarming with people putting up Christmas decorations on the outside, and carrying Christmas trees and cartons of ornaments inside. We see Camille, Ben, and Kendall among the group. Frank and Justin are working on a light display in the front yard as Liam walks by.

Justin nudges Frank, and Frank nods, encouraging him.

JUSTIN

Mayor Clark? May I ask a favor?

LIAM

Of course.

JUSTIN

I'm trying to think of what to get my mom for Christmas, and since you've known her for so long, I was wondering if you could think of anything she might really like.

LIAM

Oh, Justin... I really wouldn't even know where to begin.

JUSTIN

But, you're friends, aren't you?

Frank looks at Liam with a smile. He's enjoying this.

LIAM

Well, friends... you know, that's an interesting word. Wouldn't you rather ask your father? He and your mom are friends.

FRANK

He didn't like my suggestions.

JUSTIN

Maybe something a mayor would like? Dad said you became mayor because of Mom anyway.

LIAM

Well... Sort of. Your mom, your dad, and I all ran for freshman class president, and I won.

FRANK

I only did it to impress your mom,  
but she was not happy about losing.

LIAM

No, she wasn't. But, the way she  
expressed that is by pushing me to  
do better. She made me understand  
what public service meant. When  
your dad and I went to college, I  
studied political science.

FRANK

And, then we came back to find that  
Riverton had split up into two  
towns. They wanted people to work  
at the new city hall, and the rest  
is history.

JUSTIN

I don't think I know why it became  
East and West Riverton.

LIAM

It wasn't one thing; disagreements  
over taxes, zoning. But, in the  
end it was really just that people  
had different visions for what they  
thought Riverton should be.

JUSTIN

But, the two towns are so much  
alike. It's like they're twins.

LIAM

I don't know. We have the statue.

JUSTIN

Do you still like being mayor?

LIAM

I do. I love it.

JUSTIN

Mom loves being mayor, too.

LIAM

I know she does. She's good at it,  
too. Although if you tell her I  
said that, I'll totally deny it.

JUSTIN

I won't tell her. But, will you let me know if you think of something she might like for Christmas?

LIAM

(beat)  
Sure.

Kendall approaches.

KENDALL

Hey, we need to get to the Christmas store.

LIAM

Okay. I'll talk to you guys later.

Liam walks away. Kendall sends a quick text, which we see. It's to Yale, and it simply says "On our way."

EXT. CHRISTMAS STORE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a large Christmas store located just outside of both towns.

INT. CHRISTMAS STORE - AISLE - DAY

Sarah and Yale are filling a shopping cart with ornaments.

YALE

So, if we make it to round two...

SARAH

When we make it...

YALE

You want to dress up like Mrs. Claus for the carnival?

SARAH

Liam is going to whatever they're doing for round two as Santa. I have to do something.

YALE

If he said he was going to parachute in from Santa's sleigh, would you do that, too?

SARAH

Hey! Is that possible?

Yale laughs as Sarah chooses an ornament. Moments later, Liam and Kendall come around a corner with a shopping cart filled with Christmas lights.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Oh, great.

(big smile)

Liam. What are you doing here?

LIAM

Just a little Christmas shopping...

SARAH

(peeks in his cart)

You're putting all those lights on the outside of your house? Are you trying to warn ships away from nearby rocks?

LIAM

(peeks in her cart)

That's a lot of Christmas tree ornaments. Are you decorating an entire forest?

SARAH

(as if she has a secret)

Maybe we're not using them all on Christmas trees.

LIAM

(ditto re: lights)

Maybe we're not using all of these on the outside of the house.

SARAH

Interesting. Yale, maybe we should get some extra lights.

LIAM

Kendall, go get the rest of the lights.

As the two of them continue their "discussion," Kendall and Yale walk away together and do a quick, secret fist bump for another successful mission to get Liam and Sarah together.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing shot of the West Riverton City Hall building.

INT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - LIAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Liam and Kendall come into Liam's nice but not ostentatious office, which has plenty of Christmas decorations. They are carrying bags of lights from the store we just saw.

LIAM

We could have just taken these straight over to my house.

KENDALL

We have that budget meeting in twenty minutes, remember?

LIAM

Oh, right. But that's not as fun as putting up Christmas lights.

KENDALL

Once we get Liberty Candle's distribution center, it'll give us a huge new source of tax revenue. You can decorate year round if you want.

LIAM

That center can give West Riverton the boost we've been looking for.

KENDALL

Things are going well already. The town is in good shape.

LIAM

It's my job to make sure we're in great shape.

KENDALL

Liam, you've been mayor for what? Over a decade now? The people in this town know how much time and energy you put into being mayor.

LIAM

(nods)

I can't think of anyplace else I'd rather be or anything else I'd rather do, especially at this time of year. This place is... it's what Christmas is all about.

Kendall pulls out a binder and hands it to him.

KENDALL

Maybe that sentiment can get you through the budget meeting.

Liam laughs as they head for the door.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing shot of the East Riverton City Hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah's office is also nice and decorated for Christmas but it has a lot of boxes of ornaments, lights, figurines, wrapping paper, and beyond stacked on just about any available surface. Sarah is at her desk on a phone call.

SARAH

The land out by the old mill would be perfect for Liberty Candle's new distribution center, but we're going to have to rezone it. Yes, I've got it right here, hold on...

She looks amongst the Christmas decorations on her desk. She moves a few things and loud Christmas music starts coming out of one of the boxes.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Sorry. It's a... can I put you on hold for just a second? Thank you.

She puts the call on hold and tries to figure out which box the music is coming from.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Yale!

Yale comes in a moment later and sees the problem. He finds the box, opens it, and shuts off the music.



SARAH (CONT'D)

Thank you. I hate to pull rank, but is the mayor's office really the best place to be storing every Christmas decoration ever made?

YALE

Have you seen my desk?

Yale opens the door wider and points - we can see his desk outside, piled even higher.

SARAH

We're gonna need a bigger sleigh.

Yale nods and exits the office and Sarah resumes the call.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Harry, sorry about that.

Sarah continues the call as she looks at all the Christmas surrounding her.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Establishing Sarah's mayor's residence. The house is starting to take shape, but a small army of people are still hard at work putting up more decorations. Sarah and Yale are dressing a family of snowmen.

SARAH

What are we forgetting? The judges will be here tomorrow.

YALE

(shows her checklist)

We've checked every box. We'll make it to second round.

SARAH

I *really* wish I knew what Liam is doing at his house.

YALE

Justin hasn't sent any photos?

SARAH

No. He is not our spy.

YALE

Then who is? We should have one.

SARAH

I wouldn't send someone to Liam's house to peek in the windows to see what they're doing.

(beat)

I'd do it myself. Come on.

YALE

Wait. What?

SARAH

It's not spying, it's... motherly concern. I want to make sure Justin is okay.

YALE

See? This is why you're the mayor.

They go to a nearby car, get in, and drive off. Liam and Kendall come out from behind a fence, both with binoculars.

KENDALL

Did you hear what they said?

LIAM

Not really. I was too busy trying to think of an excuse to be behind this fence with binoculars.

KENDALL

Bird watching.

LIAM

Oh. That's good.

KENDALL

I think they said something about checking on Justin.

LIAM

He's at my house...

Liam and Kendall exchange panicked glances and scramble toward the street.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

There are lots of people working on the house, but Sarah and Yale have found a spot where they can try to see through a big window at the front.

YALE

Can you see anything?

SARAH

Not really. We need to get closer.

Liam and Kendall come up behind them. Liam and Sarah's interaction is less convivial here, but still not petulant or snide in any way - more like they are a little guilty and defensive about it.

LIAM

Most people just ring the bell.

SARAH

(startled)

Oh, hi... Fancy seeing you here.

LIAM

Outside my house? Imagine that.

(beat)

You're spying on us!

SARAH

No, I was...

YALE

(stage whisper)

Checking on Justin.

SARAH

Checking on Justin.

LIAM

Justin is fine. We were only gone for twenty minutes.

SARAH

You were gone? Where did you go?

(sees binoculars)

With binoculars?

KENDALL

(stage whisper)

Bird watching.

LIAM

We were bird watching.

SARAH

Really? Any interesting birds in the trees at my house?

Liam and Sarah face off, both still wanting to sustain the charade, but then they both deflate a bit, admitting defeat.

LIAM

Look, the judging is tomorrow, and I don't know about you but we have a lot left to do. Can we just agree to let the Christmas cookies crumble where they may?

SARAH

No more spying on each other?

LIAM

Run a clean race.

SARAH

Yes. I can agree to that.

They shake on it and start to walk away.

LIAM

It was Kendall's idea anyway.

SARAH

Yale totally put me up to this.

KENDALL

(looks at Yale)

Did you see that bus we just got thrown under coming at us?

YALE

Nope.

They sort of shrug and nod an "oh well" and walk away.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is on the phone next to Justin as Liam approaches.

FRANK

I'll be there as soon as I can,  
Mrs. Murphy. Okay. Bye.

He disconnects the call.

LIAM

Everything okay?

FRANK

Not with Mrs. Murphy's fuse box. I need to go out there and figure out what's wrong. Justin, get your things. I need to drop you at your mom's office.

LIAM

If you're in a hurry, I can take him.

JUSTIN

Can we look for a present for my mom on the way?

LIAM

Sure.

FRANK

Okay. Thanks, Liam.

(to Justin)

See you tomorrow, bud.

Frank hugs Justin and exits. Liam and Justin head off.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON STREET - NIGHT

Liam and Justin are walking down the merrily decorated street as Justin looks in store windows.

JUSTIN

Do you think she'd like a watch?

LIAM

No, she wears the one her mom gave her. She has since high school.

JUSTIN

Wow, you really do know her.

LIAM

(deflects)

No, not really. I used to, but these days we mainly just see each other at the occasional event. And whenever we get a big snowstorm.

JUSTIN

Huh?

LIAM

You know how the square is divided between the two towns? Well, the path that runs up the middle of it is divided between us as well. So, every time it snows, we have to decide which town is going to shovel the snow off the path.

JUSTIN

How do you do that?

LIAM

You'd be surprised at how much gets decided by the flip of a coin around here.

JUSTIN

(laughs)

Well, I appreciate your help anyway. I really want her present to be something big.

LIAM

Christmas presents don't need to be big to be meaningful. The flashiest gifts are often the ones that get used the least. Sometimes it's the little things that mean the most.

Justin takes that to heart as they keep walking.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the East Riverton City Hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarah is at the table in her office with several gift wrapped boxes, trying to tie bows on them. Justin enters.

SARAH

Hi, honey. I'm almost done here.

Liam enters somewhat hesitantly. Sarah is surprised.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Liam. Hi?

LIAM

Hi. Frank had an emergency work call, so he asked me if I could bring Justin over.

SARAH

Oh, well... I appreciate that.

JUSTIN

What's for dinner?

SARAH

It'll depend on how much of a mess the kitchen is in with all of the decorations.

JUSTIN

I'll get the takeout menus from Yale's desk just in case. Thanks, Mayor Clark.

LIAM

Anytime.

Justin runs off, leaving Liam and Sarah alone. Sarah, unable to get the bow tied, is frustrated.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Do you need help?

SARAH

I can do it myself.

She tries and clearly can't. Liam wiggles his fingers.

LIAM

Ten fingers, no waiting.

Sarah nods and Liam comes over to put his finger on the bow so she can finish. They repeat this on the other presents.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Who are all these for?

SARAH

People helping out with the competition. Just little thank you slash Christmas gifts. I've been so busy I haven't had a chance to wrap them until now.

LIAM

I can identify. Budget?

SARAH

Zoning. Being mayor certainly is glamorous, isn't it?

LIAM

Hey, at least we get those really big scissors to cut ribbons with.

They smile at each other.

SARAH

How do you balance everything that needs to get done?

LIAM

Who told you I do?

(they share a smile)

I don't know, I think it's just a matter of perspective and making sure that the things at the top of your to-do list are the things that matter the most.

Sarah finishes tying the bows and they have a brief moment where they acknowledge their commonalities.

SARAH

Thank you.

LIAM

Anytime. Good luck tomorrow.

SARAH

You, too.

Liam heads toward the door, and both of them smile at the interaction.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah's house has decorations, but is not completely lit up yet.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is beautifully done for Christmas. Justin is on the couch with a bowl of popcorn watching a Christmas movie as he snuggles under a blanket. Sarah enters.

SARAH

It's getting late.

JUSTIN

I'm watching a Christmas movie.

He throws back the blanket as an invitation for her to come join him.

SARAH

Justin, the competition starts tomorrow, and I have so much work to do that I...



She remembers the conversation she just had with Liam. She shakes her head and goes to join him. They snuggle and watch the movie.

**END ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the now fully decorated house.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben and Camille are in the kitchen, which is full of holiday cheer, as Liam and Kendall enter. They are checking on every little detail and drinking mugs of cocoa.

CAMILLE  
How's the cocoa?

LIAM  
Mom, it's perfect.

KENDALL  
Absolutely delicious, Camille.

LIAM  
The judges are going to love this.

CAMILLE  
We are absolutely going to win.

LIAM  
Mom, You say that every year, and we haven't yet.

CAMILLE  
Then we're overdue.

KENDALL  
Yes, you're right. There is no way any mayor's house could be more merry than West Riverton's today.

They all toast with the cocoa.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of Sarah's house, which is fully decorated now and looks quite merry.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The inside of the house is just as beautiful as the outside, fully dressed for Christmas.

Sarah and Yale enter the living room just as Justin turns on the table top Christmas bell choir, which are all on the mantlepice above the fireplace. They start lighting up and playing a Christmas tune.

SARAH

I really do love those.

YALE

I thought they were really fun and different. It's going to help us stand out from the crowd.

JUSTIN

(represses a smile)

Yeah. They're very unique.

Justin hands the remote to Sarah as he leaves the room. Yale and Sarah don't notice his reaction.

YALE

We still have awhile before the judges get here. East and West Riverton are their last two stops of round one.

SARAH

I wish they were seeing us last.

YALE

They'll be so blown away by what we do that they won't even notice what West Riverton does.

SARAH

After all these years I have learned to never count Liam out. And, if we *both* make it to the next round it's going to be even harder to get to the finals. We're going to have to pull out all the stops on the Christmas carnival.

YALE

Why do you think we're using your office as a storage room?

SARAH

(nods - looks at watch)

A couple of hours, huh? I think I need a distraction.

Sarah heads for the door.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the coffee shop.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

We start with a tight two-shot of Sarah sitting at the counter and Maureen behind it and we don't see what they are talking about at first.

SARAH  
Give me another one.

MAUREEN  
You've already had two. Don't you think that's enough?

SARAH  
I need all the strength I can get.

Maureen hesitates then shrugs. She reaches behind her and pulls out... another slice of the fruitcake, which she sets in front of Sarah.

MAUREEN  
Don't say I didn't warn you.

Liam walks in and pulls up a seat on the West Riverton side of the counter, next to Sarah. He sees the empty plates. Sarah looks at him as if daring him to say something.

LIAM  
I'm not saying a word.

SARAH  
Smart man.

LIAM  
Nervous?

SARAH  
No. Just hungry. You?

LIAM  
Not at all. Maureen, could I get a slice of fruitcake... if there's any left.

Maureen goes to get another slice of the cake.

SARAH  
Are you ready for the judges?

LIAM

Very ready.

SARAH

Us, too. We're going to knock it out of the park.

LIAM

Same here. You should come join us when the judges take their tour.

SARAH

Really? Why?

LIAM

It's the neighborly thing to do. Or I could bake you a casserole...

SARAH

(beat)

Okay, I'll be there... and if you want to come over for our tour...

LIAM

Great.

SARAH

Yes, it will be. It's going to be really, really great.

LIAM

Us, too. I have never been more sure about anything in my life.

There is a moment of tense silence. Maureen brings the slice of cake and sets it in front of Liam. We see from the looks on Liam and Sarah's faces that their confidence is a bit of a façade.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Maybe you should just bring the whole cake.

SARAH

And maybe make another one?

They both dig in.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah's house is brightly lit with Christmas lights and there is a large group of people admiring the decorations - Sarah, Yale, Justin, Frank, John from Liberty Candle, and seven people with ribbons on their lapels signifying they are judges. There are others as well - it's a festive group.

Liam and Kendall are hanging out in the background as Sarah points out a group of snowmen that are near the front door.

SARAH

Look closely, and you can see that each of our snow people is named after members of my family - it's a tradition we have.

LIAM

(to Kendall)

That's a nice touch. We should have done that.

KENDALL

We'll be fine.

They direct their attention back to Sarah.

SARAH

And one more thing before we go inside, if you'll direct your attention to the roof...

She points, and Santa and his reindeer light up, with Santa saying "Ho Ho Ho!" There is applause.

LIAM

(to Kendall)

I knew we should have had reindeer. Is it too late to get reindeer?

All Kendall can do is look at him with an arched eyebrow.

SARAH

If you'll all follow me, we have some special surprises inside.

Everyone starts going for the front door.

KENDALL

We should probably go get ready for the judges at your house.

LIAM

Okay... Let me just...

Liam gets Sarah's attention with a wave and indicates that they are leaving. Sarah nods and smiles.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group enters the living room as the bell choir is ending. Everyone is all smiles and it ends with applause.

SARAH

Thank you. Feel free to look around, enjoy, and be sure to check out the kitchen. That's where we have warm apple cider for everyone.

The group disbands. John Gibson comes over to Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)

John, thank you for coming.

JOHN

Oh, are you kidding? Even though I'm not judging, I love tagging along on these tours. It really makes it feel like Christmas.

SARAH

(points)

Have you met my ex-husband, Frank, and my son, Justin?

JOHN

Yes, last year. They must be proud of what you all accomplished here.

SARAH

Actually, they worked over at West Riverton.

JOHN

Really?

SARAH

I know, it's a little unorthodox.

JOHN

I think it's wonderful. Nothing shows the spirit of Christmas more than being able to help neighbors.

SARAH

I don't suppose you could tell the judges that?

JOHN  
(laughs)  
Good luck, Sarah.

He wanders off and Sarah looks around the room, happy with the way things turned out.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A similar group with Liam, Kendall, Camille and Ben, Frank, Justin, John, and the judges have gathered on the lawn of Liam's house, which has not been lit up yet. Sarah and Yale are in the background. There is also something covered by a Christmas-themed blanket.

LIAM  
Thank you so much for coming to West Riverton. Everyone in the town is thrilled to have you all here and I, personally, want to welcome you to the mayor's residence, which, now that I look at it... could use a little light.

Liam goes to the house and hits a switch and the house practically explodes with light - colors, white twinkles, shapes, and more. It's a visual feast and the crowd oohs and aahs appreciatively.

SARAH  
(to Yale)  
We should have had more lights.

YALE  
There is nothing to worry about.

Liam flips another switch and a bunch of the lights start blinking and running, making it even more spectacular.

SARAH  
(worried to Yale)  
You were saying?

LIAM  
One more surprise before we go inside...

Liam goes to the blanket covered objects.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
I think you'll like this. They're very special. You've probably never seen anything like it.



He pulls back the drape and reveals the same Christmas bell choir we saw at Sarah's, only larger - 3-4 feet high - which begin to play the same tune we heard earlier.

There are a series of exchanges of looks here - Sarah and Yale, shocked at the sight of the bells, Sarah and Justin, who can only shrug his shoulders, and Sarah and Liam, who understands that something is wrong but doesn't know what.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Liam is sitting on the bench on the West Riverton side of the town square facing Sarah, who is on the bench on the East Riverton side a few feet away.

SARAH

It's the Christmas spelling bee all over again.

LIAM

Oh, the spelling bee. I'd forgotten all about that. We were, what? Ten?

SARAH

Eleven. What was your word?

LIAM

Frankincense. Yours?

SARAH

Myrrh.

LIAM

The magi couldn't have gotten him, like, a nice sweater or something?

SARAH

What did Billy Thompson win with?

LIAM

Poinsettia.

SARAH

Poinsettia! We get things that haven't been common in centuries and he gets a plant that is literally everywhere at Christmas.

LIAM

Completely unfair.

Yale rushes up to Sarah, practically bursting.

YALE

Sarah! They just called. We did it. We made it to round two!

SARAH

Really?

Yale and Sarah hug and celebrate. Liam sits there, looking even more worried than he was before. He puts on a smile.

LIAM

Congratulations.

SARAH

Thank you. Maybe it'll be good news for you, too.

Before she can say anything more, a very dejected looking Kendall approaches.

LIAM

Kendall?

Kendall looks down at the ground, obviously unhappy, but then she raises her head and has a sly smile.

KENDALL

We did it.

LIAM

We did it? We're in the top ten! You scared me to death!

Liam hugs Kendall. Yale and Kendall congratulate each other as Sarah and Liam come face to face. She offers her hand.

SARAH

Congratulations.

LIAM

Thanks.

SARAH

Looks like you'll be putting on that Santa suit after all.

LIAM

Looks like it. Are you ready for round two?

SARAH

Round two? Liam, I'm already picking out restaurants for you to take me to when we win the whole thing.

LIAM

The steak you're going to buy me is going to be huge.

They shake on it and something happens - it's just a moment. Are they talking about going out to dinner with each other? They both notice it but they set it aside and smile their politician smiles at each other.

**END ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the West Riverton Town Hall. A sign in front reads "SPIRIT COMPETITION CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR THIS SATURDAY!"

INT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Inside the main hall of the building, volunteers are building a Santa's Village set on the stage and the entire room is being decked out for Christmas by volunteers including Frank, Justin, and Kendall. A string quartet is practicing a lively Christmas song as Liam, Ben, and Camille walk into the room.

CAMILLE

(looks around)

Oh! Look at this place. It's fantastic.

LIAM

It needs to be if we're going to make it through round two.

BEN

What can we do to help?

LIAM

I think we're in good shape. We have all the decorations we could fit in the building. The musicians are booked. I'm reading "Twas the Night Before Christmas." Frank and Justin are in charge of the light show...

Liam points and we see Frank and Justin working on lights on the stage.

BEN

We might actually make it into the final round. That hasn't happened in... ever.

LIAM

Thanks for reminding me, Dad.

BEN

I didn't mean it like that. You're doing a great job.

CAMILLE

He's right. You're so devoted to this town.

LIAM

I try to be...

CAMILLE

Liam, please. We may be your parents, but we're not your only family. All of West Riverton is your family... and you always put all of us first, no matter what.

LIAM

(gives him pause)  
Do you really think that?

CAMILLE

It's what makes you a great mayor.

This has obviously struck a chord with Liam and not necessarily in a good way.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Establishing the East Riverton Town Hall. They have a sign that says "CHRISTMAS SPIRIT COMPETITION CARNIVAL THIS WEEKEND."

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - DAY

The town hall is abuzz with activity as people set up games, food tables, and more for the East Riverton Christmas carnival. A quartet of carolers passes by Sarah and Yale, practicing.

SARAH

We have the games and the food and the raffle prizes... is that enough?

YALE

The only way we can add anything else is if we knock down a wall and do it in the parking lot.

SARAH

Maybe we need some more atmosphere. What about the string quartet we had last year? Did we get them?

YALE

No... they were already booked.

SARAH

Oh, that's too bad. Where are they playing?

YALE

Oh, you know. Does it matter? I mean, we have lots of great entertainment for our pageant.

SARAH

(beat - a slight scowl)  
They're going to be in West Riverton, aren't they?

YALE

Okay, Sarah, I think you should just focus on our carnival. Let's not get distracted by...

SARAH

See? This is what he does. He acts all innocent - "I didn't steal your bells" - but he's constantly trying to get the upper hand.

YALE

Okay. But there's nothing you can do about it.

SARAH

Oh, yeah? We'll see about that.

Sarah walks off, leaving a worried Yale behind. He pulls out his phone, and we see the text he sends to Kendall that reads "We may have to take this to the next level."

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the coffee shop.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Liam is at the counter with a cup of coffee and a snack while Maureen is behind the counter. Sarah walks in and approaches Liam, appearing ready to bite his head off but then she notices the family with children sitting nearby. She puts on her best mayoral smile and the tone of the conversation sounds pleasant, even if the words aren't.

SARAH  
(sing songy smile)  
You did it again.

LIAM  
Hello, to you, too. Did what  
again?

SARAH  
You took one of our ideas.

LIAM  
Kendall found the bells online...

SARAH  
Not the bells. Did you book the  
string quartet we used in our  
pageant last year?

LIAM  
Oh! Yeah, I did that.

SARAH  
(starts to lose it)  
Unbe...  
(puts the smile on)  
You are unbelievable.

LIAM  
I didn't "take" them. You hadn't  
booked them so I figured you were  
doing something else.

SARAH  
I guess I shouldn't be surprised.  
This is classic Liam.

LIAM  
And complaining about Liam is  
classic Sarah.

MAUREEN  
(gets between them)  
Okay. That's it. You two. Come  
with me. Come on.

She herds them toward the back.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Maureen guides Liam and Sarah into a storage room filled with  
Christmas decorations and other supplies.

LIAM

What is this?

MAUREEN

You two need to hash this out once  
and for all.

SARAH

I thought you were Switzerland.

MAUREEN

Yeah, well, even the Swiss wouldn't  
put up with you. This smiling on  
the outside façade is just covering  
up the fact that what you really  
want to do is strangle each other.  
It's gone on for way too long, so  
work it out.

Maureen leaves and the door shuts behind her. Liam and Sarah  
look at each other then look away.

SARAH

This is ridiculous. You and I are  
fine. We don't need to hash  
anything out. I mean, sure...  
we're never going to agree on  
anything...

LIAM

I completely agree.

Not seeing the irony in that, they both head for the door -  
and it is locked.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It's locked.

SARAH

It's not locked.

(tries it)

It's locked.

LIAM

What did I just... never mind.

(knocks on door)

Maureen!? Maureen!

SARAH

Hello?

There is no response.



LIAM  
Here, I'll just call.

He takes out his phone but there's a problem.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
No reception.

Sarah checks her phone.

SARAH  
Me either.

They go back to pounding on the door.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Maureen is turning the sign on the door from "OPEN" to "CLOSED" and turns to face Kendall and Yale. We hear Liam and Sarah in the background, yelling to be freed.

MAUREEN  
How long are we going to keep them  
in there?

YALE  
Justin is with Frank tonight so  
they can stay a while.

KENDALL  
Whatever it takes for them to call  
a truce.

MAUREEN  
(sits at counter)  
I should feel badly about this.

Maureen uses a remote to turn on a nearby television.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Ooh. Christmas movies.

She puts her feet up and settles in to watch. Yale and Kendall shrug and join her.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Re-establishing the coffee shop.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Liam and Sarah are sitting on the floor putting decorations they have found on the shelves onto a small Christmas tree in between them.

LIAM

We totally deserved this.

SARAH

Well... you did.

(off his look)

Sorry. I just can't help it sometimes.

LIAM

Justin thinks we're friends. Do you think there's any chance we could be?

SARAH

Stranger things have happened. I can't think of any right off the top of my head.

LIAM

Okay, let's pretend, for just a minute, that you and I are friends.

SARAH

Okay... friend... we have time. What do you want to talk about?

Liam considers for a moment as he puts on another ornament.

LIAM

The other day, we were talking about the "glamorous" job of mayor.

SARAH

Big scissors.

LIAM

Right. But... do you ever feel like you let the job get in the way of your life?

SARAH

Every day.

LIAM

I'm not talking about little things, like you're always eating take out because you don't have time to cook a proper meal.

SARAH

I worry every time I go in the kitchen that I will have forgotten how to use the appliances.

LIAM

I'm talking about big things. The important things.

SARAH

Where is this coming from?

LIAM

It's something my mom said. That I put the town first, which means by default I put myself second...

SARAH

Or third...

LIAM

You know, I never feel like my life is missing anything... but these days I find myself feeling like I might have *missed out* on something. Does that make any sense?

SARAH

It does. It's like... maybe you left some happiness on the table.

Liam and Sarah have a moment of connection, deeper than anything they have felt before. Before they can examine it any further, the door opens and Maureen enters (not wanting to be caught, Yale and Kendall have left).

MAUREEN

You're still here? Oh, I totally forgot that this door sticks.

SARAH

Yeah, that'll happen when it's locked from the outside.

MAUREEN

So... have we achieved peace?

LIAM

The only thing we achieved was a sore back and a stiff neck.

MAUREEN

Well, I guess I shouldn't be surprised. A couple of hours isn't going to make up for decades of the two of you disliking each other.

SARAH

We don't *dislike* each other.

LIAM

Yeah, what makes you think...

(off Maureen's look)

Okay, I see your point. But we're just two very different people.

MAUREEN

You're kidding right? You two are so alike that sometimes I can't tell you apart. Can you imagine what you could have accomplished if you had spent the last few decades working together instead of against each other?

Liam and Sarah scoff at this idea, but then they look at one another - both getting the same idea at the same time.

LIAM

You know... we agreed not to spy on each other.

SARAH

Yes, we did.

LIAM

However...

SARAH

I'm listening.

LIAM

We never said anything about not spying on other towns.

Sarah looks at him and starts to smile.

EXT. DOVER LAKE STREET - DAY

Liam and Sarah are sitting on a bench, both with newspapers, trying to look inconspicuous. On the other side of the street, work is underway on Dover Lake's event in their town hall, the doors of which are open. They both peek out from behind the papers.

SARAH

We shouldn't be here.

LIAM

Dover Lake is our biggest competition. They've won four times.

SARAH

No, I mean, we can't see anything from here.

LIAM

I knew we should have brought binoculars.

SARAH

Nobody would buy the bird watching story. It's December.

LIAM

They don't all fly south.

SARAH

It would look too conspicuous.

LIAM

Says the woman who brought five month old newspapers. Yours has a front page article about Fourth of July fireworks!

SARAH

It was all I could find and...

Over at the town hall, some people are looking and pointing at Sarah and Liam. They start to walk toward them.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Uh-oh. I think they saw us.

LIAM

Act cool. Act cool!

They walk away, trying to look innocent and failing.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Liam and Sarah hustle down a street and duck into a doorway to avoid being seen. They look at each other and immediately burst out laughing at their "caper." This lasts for a few moments and then they grow a little uncomfortable with the fact that they are enjoying themselves with each other. They sober up and straighten up.

LIAM

I should get back to...

SARAH

Yes. Me, too...

LIAM

I'm parked over there.

SARAH

I'm down there.

They look around to make sure they are not being seen and then walk off in different directions, each taking a glance back at the other as they do so.

**END ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

EXT. EAST RIVERTON MAIN STREET - DAY

Sarah and Yale come out of a store carrying grocery bags.

YALE

Having the carolers hand out  
homemade Christmas cookies at the  
carnival is a great idea.

SARAH

Do we have enough volunteers to  
bake as many as we need? We only  
have a few days to get it all done.

YALE

I think we're going to have so many  
cookies we're going to be eating  
them until next Christmas.

SARAH

I want to make sure we don't run  
out. Nothing can go wrong. I'm  
sure that Dover Lake is not playing  
around. And neither is West  
Riverton.

YALE

I thought you said you and Liam  
called a cease fire.

SARAH

It's... shaky. Hostilities could  
break out at any moment.

YALE

But for now you're getting along?

SARAH

For now. I mean, I've never  
thought he was a "bad" guy, but I  
guess I just haven't seen enough of  
his "good" guy side until recently.  
We actually have a lot more in  
common than I realized.

YALE

More in common like with work or...  
something more than that?

SARAH

No, don't even go there. I am definitely not interested in him that way.

YALE

You're sure?

SARAH

(strong resolve)

I am one hundred percent sure.

They walk in silence for a few steps as Sarah's resolve crumbles but only a little bit.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I am ninety-nine percent sure.

YALE

What's that one percent about?

SARAH

It's about... it's less than two weeks until Christmas. The holiday spirit is in the air. It's the romance of the season.

YALE

And, it's not all the things you have in common?

SARAH

It's really not that much. Sure, yes, we grew up in the same town and we went out for a lot of the same things when we were kids like student council and debate club. And we studied the same thing in college and now we're both mayors and we both sometimes wonder if there's... more...

(shakes it off)

But that doesn't mean we're alike.

YALE

Clearly.

SARAH

We are not alike!

(beat)

I am ninety eight percent positive.

The two of them keep walking.



EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Liam and Frank are outside the town hall as Frank works on a light panel.

FRANK

Maureen locked you in a storage room?

LIAM

I think she thought she was helping.

FRANK

Did she?

LIAM

(shrugs)

Maybe a little. Sarah and I just have so much history.

FRANK

I know. I was there for most of it. But, I think you two enjoy your rivalry too much to give it up.

LIAM

She certainly keeps me from getting complacent.

FRANK

Look, Sarah and I started with the whole opposites attract thing. But we didn't work because we realized how different we were. So, it stands to reason that the two of you *should* get along because of how similar you are.

LIAM

Okay, but you two were in love. On most days we barely tolerate each other with big politician smiles. My relationship with her is totally different.

FRANK

Maybe it shouldn't be?

Liam looks at him, surprised.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look, I've got Linda now and we make sense together. In fact, I'm going to go pick out an engagement ring tonight.

LIAM

Really? Congratulations!

FRANK

Thank you. She was like the missing piece of the puzzle I'd been looking for. Maybe Sarah is yours.

Justin approaches.

JUSTIN

Hey, Dad, I got the plug.

Justin hands Frank a cord, and Frank gets ready to plug the light panel in.

FRANK

Okay. Let's see if this is the piece of the puzzle we've been missing.

Frank plugs it in and the panel lights up to show Santa. Justin and Frank high-five one another as Liam thinks about everything he has just heard.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of Sarah's mayor's house.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sarah is in the midst of baking cookies, singing a Christmas carol happily, as Justin and Liam come into the kitchen.

JUSTIN

Oh, yes! I knew I smelled Christmas cookies. Can I help?

SARAH

Spanish homework first, bake cookies later.

JUSTIN

Okay. But if East Riverton doesn't make it into the final round because you needed more help, I'm gonna say "I told you so."

SARAH

As long as you say it in Spanish.

Justin exits as Liam and Sarah laugh.

LIAM

He's a really good kid.

SARAH

Yeah. I think I'll keep him.

LIAM

Do you need a hand?  
(off her skepticism)  
We're trying this new friendship thing, remember?

Sarah shrugs and hands him a mixing bowl. The two of them get to work on baking cookies.

SARAH

Thank you for bringing Justin home. Frank called and explained... apparently he's picking up an engagement ring for Linda.

LIAM

Yeah, he told me. That's big.  
(carefully)  
How do you feel about it?

SARAH

Fine. Mostly fine.  
(shrugs)  
Frank and I started as friends and we ended as friends and we just want each other to be happy. And, Linda is great. Justin loves her.

LIAM

But...

SARAH

I guess sometimes I forget that not everything is a competition.

LIAM

I don't know if I'd be as gracious,  
especially if I wasn't in a  
relationship, too.

SARAH

What makes you assume I'm not?

LIAM

Are you? I mean, sorry, is that  
too personal?

SARAH

No, it's okay. No, I'm not in a  
relationship. Full time job, full  
time parent. Doesn't leave much  
time left for dating. And you?  
Weren't you seeing that nurse,  
Jill?

LIAM

She wanted to be closer to her  
family in Pennsylvania. She asked  
me to go with her but...

SARAH

West Riverton needs you.

LIAM

Just like East Riverton needs you.

Liam smiles and looks at Sarah - there is a moment of  
connection that goes deeper than anything that they have ever  
experienced with one another. Sarah backs away from it.

SARAH

You know, we *could* use an extra set  
of hands. I'm going to go release  
Justin from homework duty.

LIAM

Okay. Great.

Sarah walks off and Liam has to take a moment to wonder what  
was that? We see Sarah doing the same.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Later, we see Liam, Sarah, and Justin baking cookies in the  
kitchen as merry Christmas music plays. Liam holds up a  
decorated cookie and he uses it to engage in a little teasing  
interplay with Sarah.

LIAM

Now that, ladies and gentlemen, is  
a Christmas cookie.

SARAH

(with a smile)  
It's not bad.

LIAM

Not bad?! Let's see yours.

Sarah holds up one she has done.

SARAH

This is a Christmas work of art.

LIAM

Please. Mine is so much better.

SARAH

Justin, what do you think?

He holds up his cookie.

JUSTIN

I think mine's the best.

LIAM

(laughs)  
He is your son, isn't he?

They all laugh and continue the fun. They look like a family.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Establishing the town hall with a sign advertising the carnival happening "TODAY!"

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - DAY

The carnival with games, food, strolling carolers, and other merriment is underway. We see Sarah, dressed as Mrs. Claus, greeting constituents plus Yale and a guy we'll presume is his beau, John Gibson, the judges we saw earlier, Maureen and Enzo, and more.

Sarah turns and sees Liam standing there with a smile.

SARAH

You came.

LIAM

I'm really good at the ring around  
the reindeer game.

SARAH

That sounds like a challenge.

LIAM

That sounds like the acceptance of  
a challenge.

SARAH

Go ahead. I'll be there in a  
minute.

Liam walks away leaving Sarah smiling. Yale walks up to her,  
having seen all of this.

YALE

Have we dropped below ninety  
percent sure yet?

SARAH

(caught)

Aren't you supposed to be with John  
talking about how he should put his  
distribution center here?

Yale smiles and walks away as Sarah turns back toward Liam.

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - DAY

The group of carolers is walking by singing an upbeat  
Christmas tune and handing out Christmas cookies from  
decorative holiday baskets. Nearby Liam and Sarah battle it  
out on the reindeer game, which involves tossing rings onto  
the antlers of a reindeer cutout. There is quite a bit of  
laughing and fun and even a little bit of defensive play  
(Sarah tries to block his shot). The two of them are  
obviously enjoying each other's company.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Establishing Liam's town hall with the sign advertising the  
big Christmas spectacular happening "TONIGHT!"

INT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

The fully decked out hall is packed with people who are all finding their seats including Kendall and her beau, Justin, Frank and a woman we'll presume is Linda, Ben and Camille, John Gibson, Maureen, Enzo, and the judges. Liam, dressed as Santa Claus, is shaking hands with some constituents and turns to find Sarah standing there, looking lovely. She smiles, ready to make a comment about his suit.

LIAM  
Not a word.

SARAH  
(smiles)  
I was told there would be a seat  
saved for me.

LIAM  
Right this way, Madame Mayor.

SARAH  
Thank you, Santa.

They walk down the aisle to find her seat.

INT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

The show is underway with the string quartet playing, while the light show that Frank and Justin were working on plays behind them. It involves lights appearing in different holiday shapes - Santa, flying reindeer, Christmas trees, and so on. It's impressive.

It ends to enthusiastic applause and Liam, still dressed as Santa, comes out with a book. He catches Sarah's eye in the audience and they share a smile. The lights continue to show things from the book - a house, a mouse, etc....

LIAM  
Twas the night before Christmas,  
and all through the house, not a  
creature was stirring, not even a  
mouse...

The show continues as Liam and Sarah steal another glance.

EXT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - DAY

Establishing shot of the candle factory.

INT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - LOBBY - DAY

A crowd has assembled to hear the announcement of who made it into the final round. Sarah and Yale are representing East Riverton; Liam and Kendall are there for West Riverton.

The elves and Santa are back on the stage as John comes up to a podium to address the crowd.

JOHN

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Liberty Candle Works. I'm John Gibson, and I'm here to announce the finalists in our 50th annual New Hampshire Christmas Spirit competition. The three towns that advance to the final round will need to face their biggest challenge yet... creating a gathering that will show the heart of what Christmas truly means in their town. The winner will be announced December 23rd. Okay... let's get to it... The finalists are... Dover Lake.

The Dover Lake contingent cheers and hugs each other.

JOHN (CONT'D)

East Riverton.

Sarah and Yale cheer and hug each other. Sarah looks over to see Liam looking at her - he smiles and nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And, last but certainly not least... West Riverton!

Liam and Kendall cheer and hug, then Kendall and Yale hug. Liam and Sarah wind up opposite each other and share an impulsive hug that takes them both by surprise. They let go of one another and back away.

LIAM

Congratulations.

SARAH

Thanks. You, too. You deserve it.

LIAM

So do you.



SARAH

(warm smile)

But, we're still going to win.

LIAM

Did I mention how big the steak  
you're going to buy me is going to  
be?

They shake on it, and this time the moment that happens isn't quite as uncomfortable as it was the last time.

**END ACT FIVE**

**ACT SIX**

EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Establishing shot of the West Riverton Town Hall.

INT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - DAY

As clean up is taking place with volunteers around them, Liam, Kendall, Ben, Camille, Frank, and a few others are having a pow wow about what to do for round three. Kendall is looking at the rules for the competition.

KENDALL

We really should've planned ahead.  
We only have five days to come up  
with...

(reads from rules)

"...a gathering that shows the  
heart of what Christmas means to  
the community."

FRANK

We made it into the final round and  
we don't know what we're doing?

LIAM

We've never made it this far  
before. And, maybe it's better  
that we know who our competition is  
before we make a decision about  
what to do.

BEN

Dover Lake has won several times.  
They always go big. Lots of  
spectacle.

CAMILLE

Does anybody remember what East  
Riverton did last year when they  
were in the final round?

FRANK

The parade down Main Street.

CAMILLE

Right! Oh, that was so much fun.  
Should we do that?

LIAM

No. We need to do our own thing.  
Besides, if Sarah thought we were  
taking one of their ideas...

He shakes his head as if to say, "that would be bad."

KENDALL

Whatever we do it needs to say  
"West Riverton."

LIAM

Something that shows who we are as  
a *community*. It needs to involve  
the whole town.

BEN

I really wish we knew what East  
Riverton and Dover Lake are doing.

KENDALL

(to Liam)  
Maybe you should talk to Sarah?

Liam thinks for a moment and pulls out his phone.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing the East Riverton city hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah and Yale are in her office looking at sketches of a  
very large Christmas tree.

SARAH

I don't know... Is it enough?

YALE

It's going to be the biggest  
Christmas tree in the state. It's  
more than enough.

SARAH

But does it really speak to what  
Christmas means in East Riverton?

YALE

It's a little late to change our  
minds. They're bringing it in  
tomorrow. You signed off on it.

SARAH

I know, but that was before I knew we were going up against West Riverton and Dover Lake. My gut is telling me it's not right.

YALE

Are you sure it's not just too many Christmas cookies at the carnival yesterday?

SARAH

(laughs)  
I'm pretty sure.

YALE

Okay, well, we have five days.  
(beat)  
Maybe you should talk to Liam?

Sarah's phone buzzes. She looks at it.

SARAH

Maybe I should.

Sarah stands and goes to get her coat.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Liam and Sarah are back on the benches facing each other at the border of East and West Riverton.

SARAH

You have no idea what you're doing for the final round?

LIAM

No. Do you?

SARAH

Not really. I mean we had an idea about a... I probably shouldn't tell you this, but whatever, we're not doing it anyway. We were going to do a really big tree lighting.

LIAM

That's... nice.

SARAH

Exactly. Nice. Not winning. So, now we're trying to come up with something else in five days.

LIAM

Should we be talking about this?  
We are still competing.

SARAH

I know, but... I like talking to  
you about things like this.  
(off his smile)  
Don't let it go to your head.

LIAM

I'm not, I... I like talking to  
you, too. Kendall is great, and I  
love working with her, but she  
doesn't understand me the way you  
do.

SARAH

I know what you mean. Yale is the  
best Chief of Staff in the world,  
but even he knows when I need  
something more. He had just  
suggested I reach out to you when  
you sent me the text.

LIAM

Huh... it was Kendall's idea to  
send you the text.

They think about that for a moment.

SARAH

You don't think...

LIAM

Nah...

They shrug it off.

SARAH

So, what do we do about the final  
round?

LIAM

Maybe we need to know what our  
competition is doing.

SARAH

Road trip to Dover Lake?

LIAM

I'll drive if you bring the snacks.

SARAH

Deal.

They head out of the square.

EXT. DOVER LAKE PARK - NIGHT

A sign says Dover Lake Park and Liam and Sarah poke their heads out from behind it.

SARAH

Are you sure this is where they're doing it?

LIAM

Kendall's sister lives here. She said they were going to have a practice run tonight here in the park.

SARAH

Oh wait. Over there.

(points)

What are those people doing?

LIAM

They're looking up at the sky.

SARAH

(looks up)

I don't see anything.

Suddenly we hear Christmas music and colorful lights brighten the scene. We don't actually see Dover Lake's presentation but from Liam and Sarah's dropped jaws we can tell that what they are watching is pretty spectacular. Lights blaze and the music soars while we hear cheers from the small group of Dover Lake residents who are running the test. Liam and Sarah can only stand there and watch, agape.

EXT. ENZO'S PIZZA - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the pizza place.

INT. ENZO'S PIZZA - TABLE - NIGHT

Liam, Sarah, Kendall, Yale, and Justin have demolished a Christmas tree pizza. Enzo brings out another and sets it on the table.

ENZO

Here you go. Dig in!

SARAH

Thanks, Enzo. You may want to keep them coming.

ENZO

The Dover Lake rehearsal was that spectacular?

LIAM

I've seen superhero movies that didn't have that many special effects.

SARAH

There's no way we can compete against that. They're going to win and get the candle and the prize money...

LIAM

And probably the distribution center, too.

ENZO

I'll make another pizza.

Enzo exits.

YALE

You know, maybe our big tree is...

They all look at Yale. He realizes the futility of it.

YALE (CONT'D)

I really need to let go of the big tree, don't I?

SARAH

Unless you can figure out a way to make it shoot fireworks out of the top, yes.

JUSTIN

That sounds kinda cool, but I don't think we should do that.

SARAH

Why not?

JUSTIN

I don't know. It's like what you said, Mayor Clark. Christmas isn't about the biggest or the fanciest. Sometimes you can say a lot with something small.

There is a moment of glum silence but then Liam and Sarah both start to perk up at the same time, ideas forming. They look at each other.

LIAM

The little things...

SARAH

That's what matters...

LIAM

If Dover Lake is going big...

SARAH

Then we should go small. Something more personal.

LIAM

Something with heart that the whole town can do instead of just sitting and watching a show in the sky.

SARAH

(looks at the table)  
Like enjoying a meal with your friends and neighbors.

LIAM

Christmas dinner. A potluck. Everybody brings something...

YALE

Uh, guys...

SARAH

The entire community coming together to share favorite holiday dishes and sing carols and...

KENDALL

Liam, Sarah...

LIAM

That's the Christmas spirit.

SARAH

It's brilliant!



LIAM

That's what we need to do!

YALE

Guys!

Liam and Sarah snap out of their reverie.

YALE (CONT'D)

You do realize that you're competing against each other, right?

KENDALL

We can't both do a Christmas dinner.

Liam and Sarah realize the issue and have a moment of disappointment, but then the idea forms again.

LIAM

Why can't we?

Kendall, Yale, and Justin are confused, but Sarah smiles. She gets it.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A crowd has massed in the town square including Liam, Sarah, Yale, Kendall, Maureen, Enzo, Ben, Camille, Frank, Justin, and others. They are all listening as Liam and Sarah lay out the plan of attack.

LIAM

Each town will do our own Christmas feasts in our town halls. The judges will go to one...

SARAH

Then we'll have a candlelight procession to the other town hall and we can all come back here for dessert - Maureen's fruitcake, of course.

CAMILLE

We'll end with both towns together?

SARAH

It's perfect since half of the town square is in East Riverton and the other half is in West Riverton.

LIAM

Well, actually, we have like ten feet more on our...  
(off Sarah's look)  
Sorry. Go ahead.

SARAH

Each town will do their own entertainment and decorations.

YALE

We can still use the big tree?

SARAH

Yes, we can.

YALE

Good, because I couldn't get our deposit back.

LIAM

And, each town will do its own food, of course. We'll have a huge feast with everyone bringing something to share.

FRANK

Are we allowed to go to each other's events?

SARAH

Of course! We encourage everyone to go back and forth between East and West Riverton. I know I'm going to come over for some of Camille's hot chocolate.

CAMILLE

I'll make an extra thermos just for you.

SARAH

Thank you, Camille. See this way we're still competing against each other, but we're also showing that we can work together.

LIAM

That's what the spirit of Christmas is all about.

SARAH

So, that's it. Any questions?

Justin raises his hand.

JUSTIN

Which side of town am I working on?

Liam and Sarah look at each other then at Frank, who smiles and nods.

GAVIN

Both.

STELLA

Both

\*

Justin smiles at that prospect.

LIAM

Okay, let's get to work.

The team disbands, but Liam and Sarah hang back.

SARAH

Okay... John Gibson said we could decide which town gets the judges first.

LIAM

You choose.

SARAH

No, go ahead.

LIAM

No, no. I insist.

SARAH

No, you should...

They stop and look at each other, then laugh a little.

LIAM

How about we flip a coin?

Sarah digs in her pocket and comes out with a coin.

SARAH

Heads East Riverton, tails West?

LIAM

Okay.

Sarah flips the coin up in the air and they watch it sail upward, the lights glinting off its surface as it goes.

**END ACT SIX**

ACT SEVEN

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

People are carrying tables into the town hall as Sarah is talking to Yale.

SARAH

Four days to go. Are we going to make it?

YALE

We'll work day and night if we have to.

Liam approaches.

LIAM

You're setting up tables already? We've barely started decorating.

SARAH

You've started decorating?

Maureen approaches.

MAUREEN

One of my ovens just broke down.

SARAH

Okay. Nobody panic. Liam, I'll lend you some people to help you with your tables, if you send some of your people to help Maureen at the coffee shop.

LIAM

Deal.

They all break.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Establishing shot of the coffee shop.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Liam is at the counter reviewing plans when there's a crash from the kitchen. He stands up just as Ben comes out.

LIAM

Dad! What was that?

BEN

You know that old cliché about too many cooks in the kitchen? Turns out it's not a cliché.

He keeps walking. Liam is concerned.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON MAIN STREET - DAY

Liam comes out of a store with Justin, who looks dispirited.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry this is taking so long.  
I know you're busy.

LIAM

Justin, don't worry about it. I told you I'd help you find a present for your mom, and we're not going to stop until we do.

JUSTIN

Christmas is almost here.

LIAM

Okay... maybe we've been coming at this the wrong way. What makes you think of your mom?

JUSTIN

What do you mean?

LIAM

Sometimes I'll be at work or out in town and something happens that makes me think about *my* mom. It could be a sound or a smell. Hot chocolate does it for me. What makes you think of your mom?

JUSTIN

(ponders)

Christmas carols. She's always humming or singing Christmas carols, even when it's not Christmas time.

LIAM

(laughs)

You know what, you're right.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

(thinks)

I have an idea. Come on.

He and Justin continue down the sidewalk.

JUSTIN

Does a Christmas song make you think of my mom, too?

LIAM

No, not really.

JUSTIN

What does?

LIAM

(taken aback)

Uh... well... whenever I have to make a decision at work, I think of your mom and wonder what she'd do.

JUSTIN

That's cool. You said she made you do better when you were class president. I guess she still is.

LIAM

(beat)

You may be right.

Liam thinks about that for a moment.

JUSTIN

Where are we going?

LIAM

(looks around)

There.

Across the street is a music store with Christmas records in the front window. Justin's eyes light up.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Liam and Sarah are standing in front of the West Riverton town hall. Behind them, volunteers are adjusting a lighted sign on the wall that reads "WELCOME LIBERTY CANDLE JUDGES!"

LIAM

I think we're in good shape.

SARAH

We have less than forty-eight hours. What if there's a problem?

LIAM

There won't be.

Behind them, there's a bit of a ruckus and Liam and Sarah turn just in time to see the lights on the sign sputter and go dark, which in turn makes all the other lights on the town hall go out.

Liam and Sarah look at each other, take deep breaths, and go to see if they can help fix the problem.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Establishing.

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - DAY

Tables are being set up for the food, and decorations are being added. Kendall and Yale are standing at a table with a small, simple display that has recipe cards in it. Liam and Sarah are there listening to the explanation of what it is.

KENDALL

So, Yale and I were thinking that instead of just sharing the food, we share the recipes, too.

YALE

See, like this is one for my mom's gingerbread that she makes every year.

KENDALL

And mine will be for the maple glaze on the Christmas ham I'm baking.

YALE

We can all do recipe cards and if someone likes something, they can take a card and make it for their own family.

SARAH

I think it's brilliant.

LIAM

Me too. I love it. It's great to see the two of you working together like this.

SARAH

I agree. See what we can accomplish once we let go of all that silly rivalry business?

Liam and Sarah walk off talking and smiling. Kendall and Yale turn to each other and can't help but shake their heads and laugh.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the East Riverton city hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarah is at her desk, working on a laptop in the otherwise quiet offices and humming a Christmas carol as usual. Justin enters and smiles as he listens for a second. Sarah looks up and sees him.

SARAH

Hi, sweetie. What are you smiling about?

JUSTIN

Nothing. Dad said to tell you I'm staying at his house tonight since you're going to be working late.

SARAH

Okay. How are things going in West Riverton?

JUSTIN

Fine. I think. Mayor Clark said he felt really good about how far we've gotten. Although when he said it, he had a vein sticking out on his forehead just like you do when I don't clean my room.

SARAH

(smiles)

Ah. Okay. I'll go check on him in a little bit. I just need to finish my Christmas shopping.



JUSTIN

Christmas is in, like, four days.

SARAH

I know. I just got a little sidetracked with work and the competition and everything. Don't worry, I got your presents weeks ago, I'm just stuck on what to get a few friends and people I work with.

JUSTIN

Oh, I can help with that. What makes you think of them?

SARAH

What makes me think of them?

JUSTIN

Yeah, like who are you shopping for?

SARAH

Well... I was looking for something for Liam.

JUSTIN

Okay. So, you were probably working and then you thought of Mayor Clark and decided you needed to get him a present, right?

SARAH

Right.

JUSTIN

What made you think of him?

SARAH

I'm not sure. I was doing some paperwork and then I...

(smiles)

I looked up at the Christmas tree and I wondered what the tree in his office looked like. And I thought mine is definitely nicer.

JUSTIN

(laughs)

Okay, well, maybe you could help him make his tree as nice as yours. I mean, that seems like it would be a great Christmas present.

SARAH  
(smiles)  
How did you get to be so smart?

She hugs Justin as the two of them appreciate the tree.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Liam and Sarah are sitting on the benches opposite one another, both looking like they haven't slept in days.

SARAH  
A few more hours to go. I think  
we're in good shape.

LIAM  
Me, too.

SARAH  
I should probably go get dressed.

LIAM  
Me, too.

There is a pause as they don't move.

SARAH  
Okay, I'm going.

LIAM  
Me, too.

But they still don't move. That seems to be okay with them for now.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

People are arriving at town hall for the East Riverton Christmas feast.

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Everything appears to be in place - the room is decorated, Christmas music is playing, lights are lit, people are starting to arrive with covered dishes of food, and the whole room looks merry and inviting.

Sarah, wearing a lovely dress of green and red, is talking to a few people and pointing, giving instructions for last minute to-do items.

The people go off on their mission, and she turns to see Liam at the doors of the hall, looking handsome in a suit and stylish overcoat with a Christmas boutonniere. She smiles and goes over to him.

LIAM

You look... beautiful. Very festive.

SARAH

Thank you. You look very handsome... and festive also.

LIAM

Thank you. I just came to check on you. Everything okay?

SARAH

People are starting to show up. The judges should be here in about an hour. You?

LIAM

It's all looking good.

They take a moment and look out at the room. Sarah looks at Liam, who appears contemplative.

SARAH

Are you okay?

LIAM

Oh, yeah. No, I'm good. I'm just... Do you remember we were talking about the job sometimes getting in the way?

SARAH

I do.

LIAM

These last few weeks have been great. Especially the last few days, working with...

He was going to say "You" but diverts.

LIAM (CONT'D)

East Riverton.

SARAH

I agree. I mean, I feel the same about working with West Riverton.

That's not what she meant either.

LIAM

But after tonight, the competition is over and then what? Are we just going to go back to our jobs and our lives and not spend any time together again? The towns, I mean.

SARAH

That's not what I want... For the towns.

LIAM

Me either.

The two of them have a definite moment, both unable to say what they really want to say. They contemplate that and then she sees Justin waving at her to come to the other side of the room.

SARAH

I need to go...

Sarah starts to leave, but Liam stops her.

LIAM

Sarah... Win or lose we should be proud of what we've accomplished.

SARAH

What our towns have accomplished.

LIAM

Hear, hear.

They stand there looking out at the room for a moment, then look at each other and smile. They head off in opposite directions.

As they walk way, Kendall and Yale step into the shot.

KENDALL

What's it going to take to get those two to realize they are meant for each other?

YALE

A Christmas miracle.

Kendall nods and the two of them walk off as the competition gets underway.

**END ACT SEVEN**

**ACT EIGHT**

EXT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Establishing the town hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

As Christmas music plays, we see Sarah, Yale, Frank, Justin, Enzo, and others enjoying the festivities along with John Gibson and the judges we saw earlier. They are sampling food from various crock pots and dishes, sipping warm apple cider, singing, and more.

It's a warm scene as people eat, chat, embrace, and laugh together - a community united.

But it's not just East Riverton. We'll also see some West Riverton people there including Ben, Camille, Kendall, and Frank who are enjoying the evening. And of course Liam is there - he and Sarah catch each other's gaze at some point, and he offers her a thumbs up. She smiles in appreciation.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Sarah, carrying a candle, leads John and the judges to the West Riverton town hall, with lots of the townsfolk trailing behind, also carrying candles. Liam is at the front doors with West Riverton townsfolk.

As they arrive, Sarah walks up to stand next to Liam, and they address the crowd.

SARAH

Judges, John... thank you for joining us tonight. We're so happy you wanted to be a part of our community for Christmas. And speaking of community, we could not have done our dinner without Mayor Liam Clark and all of our friends in West Riverton.

Liam steps up.

LIAM

Thank you, Mayor Reed. Our two towns came together tonight to show that Christmas is a time for sharing.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

We can't think of a better way to celebrate the holidays than to share it with all of you. We hope you're still hungry because we have lots of food! Merry Christmas!

The judges follow Liam into the town hall as everyone applauds.

INT. WEST RIVERTON TOWN HALL - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

The music continues and we see West Riverton's celebration in their merrily decorated town hall. Tables have been set up throughout, just like East Riverton, but the decorations and specific dishes are different.

And while we'll see a different crowd, many of the people will be the same as in the East Riverton scene including Liam, Kendall, Ben, Camille, Sarah, Yale, and others. The community has really come together to make this a festive and joyous gathering, evidence of which can be seen on the faces of those having a very merry time.

We'll make a point of seeing the judges and John enjoying Camille's hot chocolate again, and see Camille sneak a thermos to Sarah.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

In the center of the square between the two benches, Maureen is at a table piled high with boxes of fruitcake. A crowd including John and the judges gathers.

Liam and Sarah step up to address the crowd.

LIAM

Thank you again, everyone, for coming tonight.

SARAH

This town square straddles the border between East and West Riverton. It was here when it was simply Riverton; one town. So was Maureen's coffee shop. Her family has been serving their famous fruitcake for more than forty years.

LIAM

We couldn't think of a better place to end our evening than in the spot where our two towns come together. To us, that's the spirit of Christmas.

MAUREEN

Who wants fruitcake?!

The crowd cheers and Liam and Sarah start to pass out slices to people as they come up.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

It's later and the coffee shop is dimly lit and looks empty.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Only a few lights are on and Liam is sitting at the counter in the otherwise empty restaurant. Sarah comes in, walks over to him, and sits down.

SARAH

You're sitting on the East Riverton side.

LIAM

Just seeing what the view is like from over here.

SARAH

Where's Maureen?

LIAM

She's been baking fruitcake for the last three days. I told her to go on home and I'd close up for her.

SARAH

Now that's what I call a mayor.

LIAM

(smiles)  
Back at ya.

They enjoy a moment of companionable silence.

SARAH

We did good tonight.

LIAM  
Everybody did.

SARAH  
Do you think it was good enough?

LIAM  
Dover Lake had fireworks.

SARAH  
That doesn't seem very Christmas-y.

LIAM  
They were in the shapes of reindeer  
flying across the sky.

SARAH  
We had Enzo's pizza shaped like  
Christmas trees.

They laugh a little, then turn back to the counter.

LIAM  
I really want to win.

SARAH  
I do, too.

LIAM  
But if we don't... I hope you do.

SARAH  
And if we don't win... Oh, what am  
I saying? We're going to win.

They both laugh and then it tapers off.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I hope it's you if it's not us.

LIAM  
What if Dover Lake wins?

SARAH  
Maybe it's a sign that it's time  
for someone else to take the wheel.

LIAM  
(considers)  
Yeah. But you love being mayor.



SARAH

So do you. I'm just not sure how much longer we can keep leaving all that happiness on the table.

They consider that for a moment, looking around the room.

SARAH (CONT'D)

The view is not too bad from this side.

LIAM

I was just thinking the same thing.

Sarah gets up.

SARAH

I'll see you tomorrow?

LIAM

Yes, you will.

Sarah goes to the door and looks back at Liam as he is looking around the diner. She smiles and starts out the door, not noticing Liam turn to look at her with a smile.

EXT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - DAY

Establishing shot of the West Riverton city hall.

INT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - LOBBY - DAY

Liam, Sarah, and Yale are all gathered in the lobby of the city hall next to the Christmas tree waiting anxiously.

SARAH

John didn't say anything?

LIAM

Just that he wanted to meet.

YALE

What do you think he wants?

SARAH

I don't know, but they usually announce a winner by now.

LIAM

Maybe he's coming to tell one of us that we won.

SARAH  
Or tell us we lost.

The door opens and Kendall enters with John.

JOHN  
Good morning.

LIAM  
John, hi. Welcome.

SARAH  
Hi, John.

JOHN  
I'm sorry for the last minute meeting, but we have a bit of a situation on our hands.

LIAM  
What kind of a situation?

JOHN  
In the fifty year history of the Christmas Spirit competition, this has never happened.

SARAH  
What is it?

JOHN  
We have seven judges. One voted for Dover Lake, three voted for East Riverton, and three voted for West Riverton.

LIAM  
It's a tie?

SARAH  
So, what happens now?

JOHN  
The rules were written decades ago and I didn't even know about it but... in the event of a tie, one person must cast a vote for one of the finalists.

SARAH  
Who?

JOHN  
Me.

Everyone in the room is shocked at this development, and none of them look happy about it. Nostalgic Christmas music begins to play.

INT. WEST RIVERTON CITY HALL - LIAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Liam is in his office working and comes across a manila folder with a post-it note attached. He looks at it and it says "NEED A DECISION ON THIS ASAP."

Liam sits back in his chair - this is the thing that makes him think of Sarah.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah is in her office working and she looks up at the Christmas tree in the corner - it makes her think of Liam and she smiles wistfully.

EXT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - DAY

Establishing shot of the candle factory.

INT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - LOBBY - DAY

The lobby is still very merrily decorated even though it is deserted except for John and Liam, who come out from within the building.

LIAM

Thanks for taking the time, John.

JOHN

My pleasure. I think we should keep this chat to ourselves.

LIAM

I understand.

JOHN

But you should know that I think coming to talk to me shows why you're a good mayor.

LIAM

I appreciate that.

JOHN

I need to sleep on it. I'll make the announcement on who I'm voting for tomorrow.

LIAM

Christmas Eve.

JOHN

Seems appropriate for a Christmas spirit competition, don't you think?

LIAM

I guess you're right.  
(shakes his hand)  
Thanks again, John.

Liam heads out the doors of the lobby.

EXT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - DAY

Liam comes out of the building and heads toward his car. What he doesn't notice is Sarah walking up from the other direction, but she sees him - and is concerned about it.

Sarah hurries toward the doors.

Meanwhile, Liam gets to his car and turns around to look back at the building just in time to see Sarah going inside. He looks just as concerned as she did to see him.

INT. LIBERTY CANDLE WORKS - LOBBY - DAY

John is just getting ready to exit the lobby when Sarah enters and flags him down.

SARAH

John!

John turns around.

JOHN

Sarah? Hello.

SARAH

I'm sorry to show up unannounced, but I was wondering if you had a minute to talk.

JOHN

Of course.

SARAH

(beat)

What was Liam here to talk to you about?

JOHN

Oh, I'm afraid I can't discuss that.

SARAH

Was he here trying to convince you how to vote?

JOHN

(beat)

Yes, he was. But I can't say anything more, I'm sorry. Why don't we go back to my office?

An unhappy Sarah exits the lobby with John.

EXT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Establishing shot of the coffee shop.

INT. RIVERTON COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Liam is sitting on the West Riverton side of the coffee shop as Sarah comes in and sits on the East Riverton side. They sit there silently for a moment.

LIAM

You went to talk to John Gibson.

SARAH

Yes, but Liam it wasn't...

LIAM

I did, too.

SARAH

(beat)

I know.

LIAM

I promised John our conversation would be private, but you're just going to have to trust me when I tell you that it wasn't what you think.

SARAH

We don't have a great track record on things like trust. You once accused me of sneaking over at night and chopping two feet off the West Riverton Christmas tree just so ours would be bigger.

LIAM

All I know is ours was bigger when I went to bed.  
(off her look)  
I didn't *really* think you chopped off part of our tree.

SARAH

Yes, you did.

LIAM

Yes, I did.  
(beat)  
Why did you talk to John?

SARAH

I promised him our conversation would be private as well.  
(beat)  
Did you lobby him for West Riverton to win the competition? To get the distribution center, too?

LIAM

Did you?

SARAH

(beat)  
Liam, if we can't trust each other...

LIAM

I know...

SARAH

(beat)  
So, what do we do now?

LIAM

Wait to find out who won, I guess.

The two of them look at each other, their hearts breaking a little bit. Liam extends his hand.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Good luck.

She shakes his hand.

SARAH

Good luck to you, too.

Outside, a light snow begins to fall as Sarah turns and walks away. This time, no matter how much they want to, they don't turn back to look at one another, and Sarah leaves the coffee shop.

**END ACT EIGHT**

**ACT NINE**

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

Justin is outside of Liam's house shoveling snow off the front walk. Liam comes out and sees him.

LIAM

Justin? Why are you shoveling my front walk?

JUSTIN

You told me that story about snow in the town square and how you flip a coin to decide who shovels it. So, when I got up this morning and saw all this, I thought of you. This is my Christmas present.

LIAM

My... that's very kind, Justin, but you didn't have to do that.

JUSTIN

If I had to do it, it wouldn't have been a present, would it?

LIAM

I suppose not.

JUSTIN

It's like you said the other night at the Christmas feast - the holidays are a time for sharing. So, I'm sharing our snow shovel with you.

LIAM

That's very thoughtful Thank you, Justin.

JUSTIN

Merry Christmas, Mayor Clark.

Justin moves off down the walk as Ben comes out of the front door to join him on the stoop.

BEN

Good kid. Reminds me of you.

LIAM

Really?



BEN

Taking time out of his Christmas Eve to come over here and shovel snow? He'll make a good mayor one day.

LIAM

Maybe he can win the Christmas Spirit competition.

BEN

Liam, winning doesn't always mean coming in first place.

LIAM

I'm pretty sure that's exactly what it means, Dad. You and mom always encouraged my competitiveness.

BEN

But only with things that we thought mattered to you. Is there something that means more to you than the competition?

LIAM

(beat)

Yes. But I don't know if I mean more to her.

BEN

(shrugs)

Only one way to find out.

Ben goes back inside as Liam considers what he has heard.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Establishing shot of Sarah's house.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah and Frank are at the fireplace where we saw the bells earlier - they are still there - stuffing the stockings that are hanging on the mantelpiece as Christmas music plays.

FRANK

You're very quiet today. Are you worried about the competition?

SARAH

No. If West Riverton wins, I'll be happy for them.

FRANK

What have you done with Sarah?

SARAH

(smiles)

I guess I'm just finally understanding that this whole rivalry thing with them has been a big waste of time. All the things we could have been doing...

FRANK

It's not too late.

SARAH

I think it might be.

FRANK

So, what? You're just going to go back to being rivals again?

SARAH

No... I think it might be time to see if someone else can do a better job than I have.

FRANK

Wait. You're talking about not running for re-election? Seriously, where is Sarah?

SARAH

There's so much more out there, Frank. And this job just keeps getting in the way of it. It got in the way of us.

FRANK

There was a lot more to it than that. Us not working was not your fault.

SARAH

Thank you for saying that. And don't get me wrong, I'm happy that we're good and that you have Linda, but I told... a friend... that I sometimes feel like I'm not grabbing all the happiness I can.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Like I'm leaving some of it on the table. I don't want to do that anymore.

FRANK

Then don't.

SARAH

I wish it was that easy.

FRANK

I didn't say it was easy. But just take it one thing at a time. Looking back over the last few weeks, what's the one thing that you feel like you left on the table? The one Christmas wish you didn't ask for?

Sarah knows. The question is what will she do about it? Her phone buzzes and she looks at the text.

SARAH

John Gibson has made his decision.

Sarah wonders what it's going to be.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the city hall.

INT. EAST RIVERTON CITY HALL - SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarah is in her office looking at the Christmas tree, humming a Christmas carol when Liam comes to the doorway. He stands there for a moment looking at her, a warm smile tinged with melancholy on his face. Sarah turns to see him.

SARAH

Hi.

LIAM

Hi. John's not here yet?

SARAH

Not yet.

LIAM

Do you want me to wait somewhere...

SARAH

No, of course not. Come in.

Liam enters the office. There is an awkward silence, then they both start speaking at once.

GAVIN I just wanted you to know.... STELLA I have to tell you something... \*

LIAM  
Sorry. Go ahead.

SARAH  
No, you.

LIAM  
No, please.

They stop again, smiling this time.

SARAH  
Do we need to flip a coin?

LIAM  
Okay, I'll go. What we said last night... about trusting each other... I need you to know that I do trust you. I trust you to keep me honest. You've been doing it since I won the student council election when we were fourteen. You make me a better person, Sarah. I don't always like it, but... I need it. I need you.

SARAH  
You did it again.

LIAM  
Did what?

SARAH  
You took my idea.

They laugh and move closer to one another - then John comes to the door carrying a bag.

JOHN  
Knock, knock. May I come in?

SARAH  
Yes, of course. Hi, John.

JOHN  
Sarah. Liam. Merry Christmas Eve.

LIAM

Same to you, John.

JOHN

I guess you know why I'm here.

LIAM

You've made your decision.

JOHN

I have. I took what you both said to me into consideration and in the end, it was an easy choice.

Liam and Sarah steel themselves, but again they are interrupted, this time by Kendall and Yale who rush in.

YALE

Sarah, Liam... you're never going to believe what's going on.

SARAH

Can it wait a minute? John was about to...

KENDALL

No, you have to see this. Now. Come on...

They all head for the door.

EXT. EAST RIVERTON STREET - NIGHT

From the street just off the shared town square we see people from the two towns have come together in the square, holding candles and singing around a Christmas tree. Everyone we know is there - Frank, Justin, Ben, Camille, Maureen, and Enzo.

Liam, Sarah, Kendall, Yale, and John walk up to the edge of the square, amazed at the sight.

SARAH

I don't understand... what is all this?

YALE

A celebration.

LIAM

But we don't know who won yet.

KENDALL

They don't care. We started getting calls this afternoon and everyone wanted to come out and spend Christmas together as a community. One community.

JOHN

Liam, Sarah... I think it's time for me to make my announcement.

Liam and Sarah nod, and they head into the square. When people see them, everyone bursts into applause and welcomes them into the crowd. They shake hands and hug people as they make their way toward the Christmas tree.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Liam, Sarah, and John step up to the tree and address the crowd.

LIAM

Everybody... thank you for this...

SARAH

We're... well, we're overwhelmed.

LIAM

John Gibson of Liberty Candle Works is here to tell us who won the Christmas Spirit competition.

John steps up with the bag still in his hand.

JOHN

Ladies and gentleman, Merry Christmas. I thought long and hard about who to cast my vote for. And I heard some very persuasive arguments from your mayors... Liam, who told me that he thought East Riverton deserved to win and Sarah, who told me she thought West Riverton deserved to win.

The crowd is surprised but not unhappy - there are appreciative "awws." Liam and Sarah look at each other, surprised and appreciative for what the other did.

JOHN (CONT'D)

In the end, my choice was simple. I cast my vote for... Dover Lake.

There is stunned silence.

LIAM  
Say again?

SARAH  
Wait... I don't...

JOHN  
The rules said that in the event of a tie, I had to vote for one of the finalists. It didn't say I had to vote for one of the towns that tied. So, that means Dover Lake winds up with two votes, East Riverton with three, and West Riverton with three.

SARAH  
So, it's still a tie?

JOHN  
(shrugs)  
We'll do two candles if we need to, but if you'll pardon the pun, I took the liberty...

He pulls the candle we saw earlier out of the bag - it now has a label... Liam reads it.

LIAM  
Riverton Fruitcake...

SARAH  
No east or west... just Riverton.

JOHN  
It's just a mock-up. But it's important because I also think that any community that works together as well as this one does, would be a wonderful place to have a new distribution center.

The crowd bursts into applause and cheering, everyone hugging, shaking hands, and congratulating.

Liam and Sarah step away from the hullabaloo.

LIAM  
One town again? Could we do that?

SARAH

We did all this... I mean, we had a lot of help...

LIAM

But we did it together.

SARAH

You'll make a great mayor of Riverton.

LIAM

Me? No, it should be you.

SARAH

No, I should step down and you should be in charge.

LIAM

You deserve the job. I'm not going to do it.

They square off, their old patterns re-emerging, but this time in a totally different way. They start laughing.

SARAH

Maybe we should let the people decide.

LIAM

I think that's probably for the best. Do you think they'll be behind reuniting the towns?

They look at the crowd, celebrating as one.

SARAH

I think we can talk them into it.

LIAM

Sure, we can. That's our job.

The two of them share a laugh, coming together and having another moment. This time they don't back away from it.

SARAH

(smiles)  
Merry Christmas, Liam.

LIAM

Merry Christmas, Sarah.



They kiss - something that delights everyone around them, especially Kendall and Yale who give each other happy high fives.

Liam and Sarah take a moment afterward to look at each other.

LIAM (CONT'D)

About that dinner you owe me...

SARAH

Owe you? I think it's the other way around, buddy.

LIAM

How about a picnic here in the square? We can do it on my side since it is ten feet wider.

SARAH

I'm going to get my tape measure.

She jokingly starts to walk away but he pulls her back for another kiss as the crowd continues their singalong of Jingle Bells. After this kiss has ended, Justin comes running up to join them and has a gift wrapped package that is very obviously a vinyl record. He gives it to his mom and they join in the singing.

Over this we see the map of East and West Riverton. The dividing line between them disappears and the town is united once again.

**END**